DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 364 034 EC 302 604

TITLE	Recruiting and Retaining Special Educators: It's Everybody's Job.
INSTITUTION	National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Alexandria, VA.
PUB DATE	May 93
NOTE	9p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Inc. (NASDSE), 1800 Diagonal Rd., King St. Station I, Suite 320, Alexandria, VA 22314 ($50 annual subscription).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	Liaison Bulletin; v19 n4 May 1993
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Change Strategies; *Disabilities; Elementary Secondary Education; *Labor Turnover; Personnel Needs; Preschool Education; *Special Education Teachers; Teacher Certification; *Teacher Recruitment; *Teacher Shortage

ABSTRACT

This bulletin deals with the critical shortage of qualified professionals in special education and related services which seriously hinders the nation's ability to serve the growing number of children and youth with disabilities, birth to age 21. For every 10.5 special education teachers now employed in the nation, school systems report needing one more to meet current demand. The supply of qualified and diverse personnel is not increasing sufficiently, and attrition in special education is higher than in general education. There is no single set of certification or licensure standards nationwide, and ineffective standards may exclude qualified persons and include unqualified persons. New certification approaches are being utilized, including generic, cross-categorical, or noncategorical certification; emergency certification; and alternative routes to certification. Strategies for finding and keeping special education professionals include: (1) a mass media campaign to recruit more teachers; (2) development and field testing of manuals to introduce students to careers in special education, promote special education career awareness, and offer support groups for practicing special education professionals; (3) finding new sources for teachers; (4) keeping special education majors in the field through the use of peer advisors; and (5) keeping teachers in practice by providing collegial support. (JDD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

LIAISON bulletin ...

A Publication of NASDSE, Inc.
(703) 519-3800

1800 Diagonal Road • Suite 320
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

W. Schrupp

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

VOLUME 19, NUMBER 4 — MAY, 1993

ED 364 034

Recruiting and Retaining Special Educators: It's Everybody's Job

See Page 8 for Special Assistant to the Executive Director for Governmental & External Affairs Position Announcement

A critical shortage of qualified special education and related service professionals seriously hinders the nation's ability to serve the growing number of children and youth with disabilities, birth to age 21.

Decreasing numbers of newly prepared professionals, a disproportionately high number of professionals leaving the field, and great variation in supply and demand geographically and by field of specialization, all point to a national profile that demands priority attention. These trends must be reversed if children and youth with disabilities are to be provided a free, appropriate public education that enables them to maximize their potential.

Policy makers and program developers obviously need valid and reliable information in order to develop informed solutions and arrive at meaningful decisions. This Liaison Bulletin presents data about the special education teaching force - characteristics, shortages and attrition; provides some background about the reasons for personnel shortages and attrition; shares strategies being used to improve recruitment and retention, and identifies national resources for obtaining additional information and ideas.

What Shortage?

The need for special education and related services professionals has grown significantly in recent years and there is every indication that it will continue to grow in the years ahead. The number of students in special education increased from 3.7 million in 1976-77 to nearly 4.8 million by 1990-91, and the rate of student increase has been greater in the past six years than it was previously.

For every 10 and one-half special education teachers now employed in the nation, school systems report needing one more to meet current demand. This shortage has existed at about the same rate for at least the past decade. In 1989-90, nationally, more than 29,000 positions were vacant or were filled by unqualified or not fully certified teachers.

Despite the persistent demand, the supply of qualified and diverse personnel is not increasing sufficiently. Fewer people are earning new degrees in special education and related professions; some who prepare for these careers never enter practice, and many of those who enter the field are dropping out. Similar shortages characterize the related services professions.

The issues described in this Liaison Bulletin were initially discussed during presentations on "Recruitment and Retention of Special Educators: Attracting and Keeping the Best - It's Everybody's Job" during the 1992 and 1993 annual convention of The Council for Exceptional Children. Dr. Lynne Cook, former director of the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, developed the program in consultation with the Teacher Education Division (TED) and the Division of Research (DR). Presentations made at the conventions regarding research findings, innovative programs, and promising collaborations are incorporated here and cited where relevant. Additional information derived from Clearinghouse holdings is used to expand the discussion.

For additional information regarding the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, please call or write Ms. Amy Baltzie, Acting Director of the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education - NASDSE - King Street Station I - 1800 Diagonal Road - Suite 320 - Alexandria, VA 22314 (703) 519-3800 or [TDD] (703) 519-7008 or via SpecialNet: NASDSE.

The *Liaison Bulletin* © is published periodically by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Inc. (NASDSE), 1800 Diagonal Rd., King Street Station I, Suite 320, Alexandria, VA 22314

An annual subscription is available at a cost of $50/yr. by writing NASDSE at the above address, calling 703/519-3800 or via Special Net: NASDSE

EC 302604

A Multi-faceted Problem

The problem is multi-faceted and is not simply a question of increasing the numbers of students preparing for careers in special education and related services. Additional factors include:

- Variability in supply and demand by geographic regions. Some cities and suburban areas may have surpluses, but major urban areas and rural districts usually have severe shortages;
- Variability in supply and demand by disability categories or by specific professional roles;
- Conflicting and sometimes limiting certification policies that restrict reciprocity in practice across states;
- Lack of administrative and collegial support for practicing professionals;
- Stress and burn-out of professionals currently employed.

Institutions of higher education in some areas continue to prepare students for careers in working with specific disabilities even where there may be a limited need for professionals with such specialization. Professionals often are unable or unwilling to relocate to areas where the greatest shortages occur, such as rural and inner city schools which are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain special education and related services professionals for their programs.

Creating a Knowledge Base

What do we know about the special education teaching force?

State data aggregated in the 14th Annual Report to Congress indicate that nearly 305,000 special education teachers were employed nationally in the 1990-91 school year, an increase of almost 60 percent over 1976-77. But fewer people are earning new degrees in special education. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that special education bachelor's degrees dropped from 16,327 in 1977-78 to 6,625 in 1989-90, and master's degrees dropped from 14,035 to 9,033.

States have been providing data to OSEP since 1978-79 on personnel employed and needed, with the latter based on countable vacancies and not fully certified personnel. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990, in an effort to improve the accuracy and comprehensiveness of data collected, changed the data requirements for states. One change requires states to report the numbers of students being prepared for special education careers (see box). Due to variations in student enrollment and college attendance patterns, many states are unable to report these data accurately, notes Lynne Cook, who led the 1992 and 1993 sessions on state and federal data requirements. One effective strategy for collecting these data is being used in Michigan. Clearinghouse consultant Lucian Parshall (Michigan Department of Education), reports that a brief in-class survey of all students enrolled in special education classes in Michigan colleges and universities has been conducted for three consecutive semesters and yields reliable data. In

Personnel data requirements under IDEA include:

Supply (included as part of CSPD provisions)

- Students - Within a state, by area of specialization, the numbers of students enrolled in higher education programs that are preparing special education and related services personnel, including leadership personnel.
- Graduates - Within a state, by area of specialization, the numbers of students who graduated with certification or licensure, or with credentials to qualify for certification or licensure, during the past year.

Personnel Demand

- Personnel Currently Employed - By area of specialization, the number and type of personnel currently employed, including leadership personnel, and those who do not hold appropriate State certification or licensure.
- Personnel Needed - The number and type of personnel, including leadership personnel, needed, and a five year projection of the numbers of such personnel, based on projections of individuals to be served, retirement, other reasons for leaving, and other relevant factors.

response to IDEA requirements, OSEP's Division of Innovation and Development reports that OSEP is developing a model that can project needs nationally and be applied to state data. Principle problems include the variability in state methodology for counting and reporting and the difficulty of formulating a regional or national aggregate.

All states have reported that they need more qualified and diverse teachers than they are able to recruit, but several states have greater needs than others. During the 1990-91 school year, for example, Pennsylvania and North Dakota needed about one teacher for every 10 employed, reflecting the national average. The State of Connecticut, however, needed only one additional special education teacher for every 215 in its work force, while Florida and Indiana needed one special education teacher for every five employed.

Who are special education teachers?

The Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) is a comprehensive sampling conducted periodically by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Recent findings for 1988-89, as reported by Sharon Bobbitt of NCES, indicated that females comprise 86 percent of special education teachers in public schools, compared with 70 percent in general education. Age distribution indicates that special education teachers leave the teaching force earlier than those in general education, with 37 percent of those in special education under age 34, compared with only 23 percent in general education. Minority distribution was fairly even, although black public school teachers in special education numbered slightly higher than general

education, 9.3 percent vs. 8 percent, still not representative of the total population served.

Attrition in special education, in the SASS findings, was 7.3 percent, compared with 5.6 percent for total teachers. Those teaching students with mental retardation were the largest group leaving, 12.6 percent, with teachers of students with learning disabilities having the lowest attrition rate, 4.3 percent. Other disability categories were not separated in the survey; rather they were grouped under "other categories" at 8.4 percent.

Erling Boe of the University of Pennsylvania reported latest findings of analyses he conducted with colleagues Sharon Bobbitt and Lynne Cook using data from NCES's 1987-88 SASS and 1988-89 Teacher Follow Up Survey (TFS). These analyses yielded slightly higher attrition estimates (7.9% for special educators and 5.8% for general educators), showed that teacher turnover at the school level was significantly higher for special educators than for general educators (20% vs 13%), and that teachers of students with learning disabilities were less likely than other special educators to leave their schools.

According to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) maintained by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), there were 578 public and private institutions of higher education in the U.S. in 1989-90 that granted degrees in special education. Of the total, 391 granted bachelor's degrees, however, there is great variation among these programs. Some are located in large "supplier" states where students leave after they earn their teaching credentials because opportunities are more plentiful elsewhere, while others are in States with severe shortages. The listing shows New York State with 36 degree-granting programs, Pennsylvania with 22, but Alaska, District of Columbia, Hawaii and Montana have only one each.

Caution should be used in interpreting these data largely because the information was derived only from degree-granting programs and do not include all programs where professionals are prepared to meet state licensure requirements. The National Personnel Preparation Program Directory published in 1991 by the Council for Exceptional Children lists close to 900 programs in the country that provide preparation programs in special education - a significant difference from the 578 reported as granting special education degrees.

The majority of institutions continue to offer special education teacher preparation within a traditional four year preservice program. Yet an increasing number of institutions are requiring a fifth year or other post baccalaureate preparation consistent with regulations of their States or recommendations of the Holmes Group.

A wide range of other program variations are emerging nationally in which candidates may complete requirements for licensure. Some are designed to meet different standards than traditional programs. Others are innovative, alternatively structured or alternatively delivered means of meeting traditional standards. Components of these nontraditional programs may include credit for experience, reconfigured curriculum, distance learning, monitoring or performance assessment.

Certification Policies Vary

Ineffective certification or licensure standards may exclude qualified persons and include unqualified persons. There is no single set of standards nationwide, just as there is no uniform perception of the severity and nature of the personnel shortage across the nation.

In terms of certification and credentialing, different approaches in the states make it difficult to evaluate equivalencies and determine which individuals are able to "fit" into specific situations. The states are different not only in how they categorize, group and place students, but also in the classifications of certification they use and the routes to professional certification they accept. Some states do not offer reciprocity to those with certification from another state. Some states license by a disability—specific category, some by service delivery models, (e.g., resource room teacher, special classroom teacher, consultant), and others have noncategorical licensure. Alternative routes to certification may be acceptable in some states, but not in others.

Misalignment of certification and service delivery policies themselves can create shortages. Teachers may be certified to teach students with mental disabilities or learning disabilities, for example, but the state policy may require a special education teacher with a generic certification who can serve students with all disabilities of a certain severity.

New Certification Routes Sought

State teacher certification requirements determine the individuals who schools can hire as special education professionals. These requirements differ from state to state and may contribute to the creation of another layer of variation that restrains mobility and further unbalances the supply/demand equation. When a state increases its requirements, the supply may drop. If there is a personnel shortage, a state may ease requirements or institute emergency or alternative certification programs to attract more personnel.

Some attempts to respond to certification problems include:

Generic, cross-categorical or noncategorical certification. This permits more flexibility and latitude in hiring and placement by moving away from a narrow categorical certification that usually permits individuals to teach only students with a category-specific disability. OSEP reports a 36.6 percent increase in cross-categorical teachers employed in 1988-89, with the greatest demand occurring in the cross-categorical title (7,714 teachers needed).

Emergency certification. Nearly four-fifths of the states have procedures to grant emergency temporary or provisional certificates, although there is great differentiation in qualifications and there are no adequate data on the quality of instruction provided by these individuals.

Alternative routes to certification. A variety of pathways are being used in a number of states, largely to bring college graduates into teaching more quickly. Although some programs have demonstrated their effectiveness, others have been criticized for recruiting individuals without experience or preparation who do not remain in the classroom.

Why teachers leave or stay

Experts agree that a critical approach to minimizing teacher shortages in special education is retaining qualified special education teachers. In an analysis of the research on attrition conducted for the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, Bonnie S. Billingsley at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, summarized research findings on retention and attrition as they relate to four major factors:

- Teacher demographics and background variables (gender, age, race);
- Teacher preparation and qualifications (academic ability, degrees held, entry path and certification status, initial commitment to teaching);
- Work experiences, rewards and values (teaching assignments, support received especially from administration, teacher autonomy and decision making, availability of resources, work load, paperwork);
- External factors (employment climate in time of recession, retirement incentives, alternatives outside of teaching, availability of other teaching positions).

Work variables are most amenable to change, Billingsley suggested, and recommended the following areas of intervention as worthy of further study:

- Work conditions (teachers' roles and responsibilities, resources needed to perform their work, caseload/class mix issues; administrative requirements, particularly paperwork);
- Administrative support;
- Rewards (intrinsic rewards, feedback and recognition; self-evaluation skills; responsibility and autonomy; extrinsic rewards); and
- Focus on beginning teachers (nature of first assignments, support such as mentor programs).

(For a comprehensive discussion of the above factors, see *Teacher Retention and Attrition in Special and General Education: A Critical Review of the Literature*, The National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education)

Strategies to Find and Keep Special Education Professionals

New approaches need to be explored which will recruit talented and diverse individuals to prepare for and enter special education professions. Effective ways to nurture practitioners' talents and skills as they seek to develop their careers and increase their professional satisfaction also need to be developed and implemented.

Three projects funded by the Office of Special Education Programs are studying innovative approaches for improving the retention of special education teachers.

(1) San Diego State University is conducting a study on two rapidly growing multi-ethnic urban districts in southern and northern California, San Diego and San Jose, to identify and examine the broad range of forces contributing to the attrition rate. After analyzing existing state data to determine factors associated with teacher mobility, the project will use a critical incident study to further identify variables. Teachers will be asked to recall events critical to their decisions to either remain in or leave the field. Extensive telephone interviews with all special education teachers including those who left in the prior 12 months for a total of 900-1, 100 teachers, will be used to identify critical factors influencing decisions to continue or terminate their careers. Major stakeholders will review findings and make recommendations for changes in policies and practices. (For information, Patricia A. Cegelka, or Donald Doorlag, (619) 594-6665.)

(2) Eugene Research Institute is administering a large-scale survey to all special education teachers in three large urban school districts and conducting intensive interviews with all who leave for work-related reasons as well as a random sub-sample of those who remain. The final year of the three-year project will be devoted to developing strategic action plans in the districts and widely disseminating the plans and findings. A National Advisory Panel will assist in refining the conceptual framework, interpreting findings, developing strategic action plans, and dissemination. (For information, Martha Morvant or Russell Gersten, (503)342-1553.)

(3) Research Triangle Institute is conducting research in the Memphis City School District concentrating on four studies: a Screening Study of all special education teachers to determine job satisfaction and career plans; an Influencing Factors Study interviewing a sample of 80 teachers; an Exiter Study with mail surveys of exited special education and general teachers on their background, training, reasons for leaving, and current positions; and a Comprehensive Commitment and Retention Study of special education and general teachers on background, training, career entry patterns, perceptions of work environment, job/career satisfaction, and future career plans. The research team is assisting the school district in developing a five-year strategic action plan to improve retention. (For information, John Pyecha, (919) 541-6314.)

(4) The University of Florida is surveying 1,500 beginning and career teachers to determine variables contributing to teacher attrition and retention. Those surveyed are being tracked over a three year period using the state data base to examine the relationship between initial survey responses and attrition. Responses will also be aggregated at the school building and district level to determine the effect of school environments and district policies on attrition rates. Exit interviews with teachers who leave the special education classroom, or transfer to another district or another state will provide additional information about attrition variables. In the final year, the project will select four schools with different attrition profiles and conduct case studies to determine how district policies, school environments, and working conditions interact to affect attrition. (For information, Mary T. Brownell or Stephen W. Smith, (904) 392-0701.)

Recruitment

Recruitment starts with attracting young people at middle or secondary school and at the college levels to consider careers in special education and related fields. Several current projects are underway.

Recruiting New Teachers (RNT) is a nationwide mass media campaign spearheaded by the David Rockefeller Jr. Foundation which has produced "Reach for the Power - Teach" public service announcements featuring Edward James Olmos and a toll free telephone number. The Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education has formed a partnership with RNT to receive and validate the names of callers who express interest in special education.

Three professional action guides are now available to help professionals play an active role in recruiting and supporting qualified special education teachers and related services personnel. The guides, developed in cooperation with CEC with input from focus groups and field-tested by CEC chapters nationwide, give recruitment and retention tips and suggest ways to create support groups that encourage teachers to work together to promote their performance and career satisfaction. Guides in this professional action series are:

- **Introducing Students to Careers in Special Education, Product #R630; CEC Member Price: $8.40/Regular Price: $10.00,** which emphasizes disability awareness activities days and social event and career awareness options such as talking to professionals and experiencing the workplace.
- **Promoting Special Education Career Awareness, Product #R639; CEC Member Price: $10.00/Regular Price: $14.30,** with samples of typical questions and answers, handouts, presentation scripts, overheads, evaluation forms, and a display layout and a resource list.
- **Support Groups for Practicing Special Education Professionals, Product #R640; CEC Member Price: $10.00/Regular Price: $14.30,als,** including "how-to" information for innovative activities, group activity sheets, model and skill development resources, collaboration resources, peer observation and feedback worksheets.

Prices cover printing costs. CEC member and multiple copy discounts are available. Call 703-264-9468 for order information.

The Clearinghouse has provided career information to more than 32,000 of these contacts. Analysis of responses to the public service announcement indicated that about one-third of the respondents are in high school or are high school graduates, one-third are in college, and one-third are college graduates. Some have degrees in other fields and are interested in a career change. Respondents are seeking information on personnel preparation programs, financial aid and other ways to explore career opportunities. Many are also seeking teaching positions while completing certification requirements.

"We publish a monthly newsletter which includes a 'Job Bank' which serves as a reminder to people that there is a personnel shortage in special education," explains Ted Beck, Supervisor of Training and Curriculum Development for Michigan's OSE. "We stress the respect and rewards of being a teacher and tap in on marketing by using more media strategies. We expanded the Special Education Personnel Development Advisory Committee which plans CSPD activities to include CEC student members. We also hired Thomas A. Fleming, Michigan Teacher of the Year/National Teacher of the Year, who is an outstanding presenter, special education teacher and clergyman, for six months to deliver motivational presentations around the state to students and advocacy groups. OSE pays expenses of special educators to participate in conferences and workshops both in and out of state."

The Clearinghouse is conducting a pilot project to match those potential recruits who want more individualized information with volunteer recruiters in all 50 states. The initial pilot involves 1,200 potential recruits and more than 300 members of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) who have volunteered to meet with recruits, talk with them about careers in special education, invite them to classrooms or special events and help answer their questions about preparation programs and career options.

Based on information from the pilot project, this personalized attention is supported by a plan to develop and recruit resources such as brochures, fact sheets, a videotape and other media as well as training for recruiters.

In Michigan, the Office of Special Education (OSE) of the Department of Education has launched a recruitment campaign with an emphasis on minorities and disadvantaged individuals with disabilities, using $100,000 in discretionary funds. In a 1989 collaboration with the Michigan Federation of CEC, this state produced a 15-minute video entitled, "Consider an Exceptional Career," sending 300 copies to building principals throughout Michigan. Another video, aimed at high school students, is now being developed. The recruitment program also includes: a) waiving registration fees for college students to attend CSPD conferences and workshops during the year; and b) developing a statewide teleconference with students now in special education preparation programs to offer peer support to other students still considering their majors.

Recruitment Energizes CEC Chapters

Use of CEC chapters to field-test the professional action manuals (see box) and to match special educators with prospective teachers has mobilized the talent of members and has enhanced chapter participation. Jan Schorr of Daytona Beach/Volusia District Schools made these recommendations for chapter activities in the future, based on pilot career awareness and teacher support group activities:

- Enlist the support of CEC Federations which can purchase or rent multimedia materials to be developed and hold leadership training institutes at their annual meetings.
- Encourage the involvement of local special education administrators. Sponsoring "Coffees" for new teachers

in a district in an informal setting and including the Council of Administrators in Special Education more fully in recruitment and retention were among successful chapter efforts.

- Focus attention on recruitment and retention materials by including them in packets for Unit Achievement Award and Award for Excellence.
- Support the continued efforts of the National Clearinghouse as well as of local teacher associations.

"It's a win-win-win situation," explains Catherine Wooley-Brown, Director of Exceptional Students Education in Polk County Schools. "Students receive on-the-job training and support in solving the problems that teachers face daily, while the influx of people and expertise provides the schools with resources they may use in their staff development and school improvement activities. The University has a laboratory in which to experiment and learn, the students have an opportunity to become teachers, and the school district has a pool of well-qualified special education teachers."

Finding New Sources for Teachers

Across the country, school systems are seeking new ways to recruit and develop qualified teachers, especially in areas of severe shortages.

"Grow your own," is the idea Polk County, Florida developed when faced with rapid population growth and high teacher turnover. In past years, school district administrators traveled to teacher training institutions in the North and Midwest to recruit graduates. Unfortunately, many of these new recruits left the area after a year or two because they did not want to remain in a rural area.

To address this problem, the district collaborated with the University of South Florida (USF) to develop an experimental undergraduate teacher training program designed to create a pool of "home-grown" special educators. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the program focused on recruiting talented paraeducators who live and have roots in Polk County.

The two-year program, which includes summer school, provides specially designed course work in accessible locations. Students are able to maintain their jobs as paraeducators during the majority of the program. According to Betty Epanchin, Associate Professor of Special Education at USF, university instructors are experimenting with several innovative instructional practices designed to accommodate the needs of adult learners. Courses are taught in integrated blocks with a focus on problem solving; master teachers mentor students in the field; and students spend a semester in general education with general education mentors. To ensure that students have a supportive and tolerant environment in which to experiment and learn, two professional development schools have been developed.

A unique career ladder program at California State University Northridge (CSUN) started with recruiting trainees into community college programs leading to an Exceptional Children's Teacher's Aide Certificate, then provided trainee support to complete an associate degree program, and culminated in a program for the trainees to continue into a B.A. degree program with a teaching credential in special education.

Joyce C. Hagen of the CSUN Department of Special Education notes that of 63 trainees, 43 were employed in special education classrooms at the end of the first project in special education classrooms, and 23 of these plan to become teachers.

A complementary program recruited traditional university students from different backgrounds into special education as part of a model to integrate preschool children. The program continued with local special education funds and extended child care for children with a variety of disabilities, including autism. University students helped deliver services and some of them were attracted to teaching careers in special education.

The program included field work in the model site, clinical supervision, a seminar in problem solving on issues related to preschool mainstreaming, an introduction to child development and an introduction to special education.

A new project at CSUN, modeled after the Special Education Para-Educator Project, recruits individuals with hearing impairments to receive undergraduate level training and to work as teaching assistants in programs educating children who are hearing impaired.

"We identified a real need in the community," said Claire Cavallaro while discussing the project to train educational assistants for mainstreaming. "People were driving 70 miles to bring their children to the program but there were no personnel to expand. The university students we recruited and trained as paraeducators could work their way through school and even if they do not enter the profession of special education they will always be advocates for children with

---

Recruiting special education teachers for rural schools, especially those that serve large populations of American Indian students, is particularly difficult. High attrition rates in those schools cause discontinuity in programs and service to students with disabilities. A Special Populations Training Project housed at Northern Arizona University is studying recruitment and retention patterns in such schools as part of an effort to prepare teachers to work with American Indian students with disabilities.

Janice M. Schnorr, Professor of Special Education at the University of Alaska-Anchorage, has worked with schools in rural areas with large numbers of Native Americans that experience acute shortages of special education personnel. The PEAKS Project: Pursuing Educational Advancement and Knowledge in Special Education: A Recruitment and Retention Program for Rural Special Educators, surveyed public and private schools and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools in Arizona, Utah, Colorado and New Mexico. The analysis of 52 school districts revealed two-year attrition rates exceeding 50 percent in 23 school districts; all but two of these were BIA

schools. The average attrition rate across all schools was 20 percent; the rate for small schools with fewer than 300 students (25 percent) was higher than the rate for large schools (19 percent).

Distance and isolation were the two major recruitment and retention problems as cited by districts. During the past three years, the project also trained five graduate level special education teachers to work on reservations in the Southwest and developed a curriculum module to meet the rural and cultural needs of the region.

Finding New Sources

Sources that have been suggested as potential targets for special education recruiting are members of the military who have been discharged with the reduction of the country's armed forces, former teachers who left the field to raise a family, middle-level managers in corporations that are retrenching, and individuals in general who are interested in changing their careers.

"Peace Corps volunteers have special qualities nurtured by their service - dedication to serve the needy, adaptability, resourcefulness, and multicultural sensitivity," states Henry Fernandez, Director of the Peace Corps Fellows/USA Program.

Local school districts and universities interested in forming a collaborative relationship with the Fellows Program may contact him at 1990 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20526; (202)606-3990.

One promising source in recent years has been the returned Peace Corps volunteer. Since 1985, the Peace Corps has been encouraging universities to develop special programs to recruit and prepare former Peace Corps volunteers to teach in subject areas such as special education and bilingual education. The volunteers are offered scholarships or low cost in-state tuition rates to pursue a master's degree program. Funds originate from the private sector and the universities. Called Peace Corps Fellows, the students commit for two-years to teach full time and attend classes part time, leading toward a master's degree and teaching certificate. More than 50 of the 200 returned volunteers completing the program have completed their special education credentials.

Some institutions that have initiated Peace Corps Fellows/USA Programs in special education include Auburn University, Northern Arizona University (including teaching in BIA schools), University of Southern California, San Francisco State University, Florida International University, University of Michigan, Teachers College of Columbia University, University of Texas at El Paso and George Washington University.

Keeping Majors in the Field

How do you retain special education majors in preparation programs? One positive approach at the University of Maryland is called Peer Advising. Peer advisors are honor students chosen by the faculty, advisor and other peer advisors who have at least 45 credit hours. They fulfill several roles:

- Advising students in special education;
- Providing academic assistance such as tutoring;
- Serving as a liaison between students and faculty;
- Informing students of university and department policies and various available resources.

All peer advisors are required to implement a service project, such as a career/job placement service, volunteer and job bank, graduate school file, financial aid file, or campus resource file. They have five office hours a week and attend an advisor led two-hour class each week to discuss student and faculty concerns, advising procedures, updates on service projects and procedures for assisting students experiencing academic difficulties.

According to Susan Fintzen who served as a peer advisor when a student at the University of Maryland and currently an early childhood special education teacher in Fairfax County, Virginia, the program gives peer advisors valuable leadership experience and a voice in the program while providing students access to advice and assistance they could not get otherwise.

How to Keep Them in Practice

One problem in the retention of special educators has been the lack of collegial support, especially for those who work in isolated areas. Maine's Support Network for Rural Special Educators was established in 1986 to reduce the high turnover of special education personnel in the state's rural schools. The network has formed regional groups that hold peer support and problem-solving activities in accessible sites, along with statewide winter retreats on content-related topics and summer teachers' academies with in-depth training on professional and social/personal development.

State job banks and personnel placement projects provide another recruitment strategy to match candidates with positions. The Clearinghouse has currently identified 25 states that engage in one or more of the following activities within their state:

- provide information about vacancies to professionals seeking positions,
- provide information about candidates to school districts seeking to fill positions,
- provide school district contact information to professionals seeking positions,
- maintain and send personnel/credential files of position seekers to school districts.

These projects also may provide information on professional salaries; state credential requirements, demographics, professional preparation programs; and financial aid for professional preparation.

The Clearinghouse is developing a matrix showing the state projects and the services each provides.

Kathryn Markovchick, Director of the program which has the theme, "Success Through Communication," said it has given teachers the inspiration to continue in special education or the reinforcement to enter the field. Participants were asked what insights they gained through the network:

"We tend to have a very isolated and at times misunderstood job. It means so much to get together for support, learning, and refinement of skills. It is a wonderful motivator for the year to come."

"I was on the verge of leaving special education because of burnout. Cooperative consultation has given me new hope that my job can be better."

"The Network has helped me maintain an active 'lifelong learner status' as well as the needed support to continue in the special education field."

"Our Network has been a major factor in keeping me in the special education field. The programs offered have renewed my enthusiasm."

The basic structure, processes and materials used can easily be replicated elsewhere. Originally funded by a grant from OSERS, the Network is now supported by state groups and participant fees.

The National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, a joint endeavor of NASDSE and CEC, fosters interaction and information exchange nationally among state and local education agencies, institutions of higher education, professional associations and others to ensure an adequate supply of qualified professionals to provide early intervention, special education and related services. Further information can be obtained from the Professions Information Center, the Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091; Telephone (703)264-9474; TDD (703)264-9480. The Professions Policy Center is located at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 1800 Diagonal Road, Alexandria, VA 22314; Telephone (703)519-3800; TDD (703)519-7008.

Special Assistant to the Executive Director for Governmental & External Affairs

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education is seeking qualified candidates for a position as Special Assistant to the Executive Director for Governmental & External Affairs. The person selected will have the responsibility for assisting the Executive Director in developing the Association's public policy agenda. The candidate will have responsibility for the following: pursuit and implementation of Assoc. public policy agenda; review, analysis and dissemination of information related to proposed and existing laws, judicial actions and Administration policy; maintaining communications with Association membership and liaison with organizations in the field. Qualifications: Master's degree plus min. of 3 yrs. experience in governmental relations leadership and education; thorough knowledge of federal processes, policies, current issues in education; and demonstrated ability in analysis and synthesis of information related to public policy and effective communication. Preferred: job experience or demonstrated knowledge of state government policy development and administrative practice. Salary range begins at $42,000 + benefits. NASDSE is an EEO employer. To apply, submit letter of application, vita, three current letters of recommendation and a writing sample to: NASDSE, 1800 Diagonal Rd., Suite 320, Alexandria, VA 22314 by 4:00 p.m. DST on June 25, 1993.

National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Inc.

1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 320, Alexandria, Virginia 22314

FIRST CLASS